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SUBJECT: CZECH DEMOCRACY PROMOTION: IRAQ

REF: A. PRAGUE 58

- [B](#). PRAGUE 66
- [C](#). PRAGUE 68
- [D](#). PRAGUE 85
- [E](#). 2005 PRAGUE 1614

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[1](#). (U) Summary and comment. This cable, the fifth in a series highlighting Czech transformational diplomacy, describes Czech democracy promotion projects in Iraq. These projects are motivated by the Czech interest in rebuilding Iraq, and promoting democracy and regional stability throughout the Middle East. To achieve these goals, the Czechs have promoted democracy by providing capacity building training to Iraqi journalists, NGOs, and civil servants. Though not the subject of this cable, the Czechs have also strongly supported U.S. policy in Iraq, committed medical teams as a member of the Coalition, and provided humanitarian aid, such as bringing Iraqi children with terminal heart disease to Prague for surgery. For details of Czech democracy promotion projects in Cuba, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Burma, and North Korea, see refs A-D. End summary and comment.

[2](#). (U) Poloff recently discussed Czech democracy promotion in Iraq with Gabriela Dlouha, Director of Czech MFA's Transformation Cooperation Unit (TRANS), and separately with representatives of TRANS' NGO partner, People in Need (PIN), including Igor Blazevic, Director, and Megan King.

Democracy & Transition Center

[3](#). (U) As with other Czech democracy promotion initiatives around the world, Czech NGO People in Need (PIN) is the primary service provider in Iraq. Since 2003, PIN has spent more than \$5 million on humanitarian aid and democracy promotion programs there.

[4](#). (U) With respect to the latter, PIN established the Democracy and Transition Center in 2005 to provide capacity building training to members of the Iraqi civil society. As described below, PIN is currently providing training for Iraqi journalists and NGOs, and is assessing the possibility of expanding training programs for other sectors of Iraqi civil society. For security reasons, the Center is located in Jordan, and is staffed by PIN workers from the Czech Republic. However, participants for the program are selected in Iraq by Iraqis trained by, and well-known to, PIN.

[5](#). (U) The PIN selection process for NGOs and journalists is unique. The challenge is to select Iraqis who are committed to rebuilding their country, not "training tourists," i.e., Iraqis who want to go to Jordan to enjoy the improved

security, plush hotel accommodations, meals, per diem, and cell phones offered by some training programs. Indeed, according to PIN, these "tourists" often move from one NGO training program to another to stay in Jordan as long as possible. To screen such people out, PIN informs prospective participants they will stay in simple accommodations, they will share their room, they will not be paid a per diem (and indeed may never make much money as a journalist or NGO), and they will not receive a cell phone or other equipment. If the prospect still wants to participate, he/she must continue to prove his/her commitment during the training to stay in program.

¶6. (U) The Czech MFA (and now TRANS), is the primary source of funding for the Center and its training programs: \$487,500 is budgeted for 2006. PIN has also received funding from NED. (PIN expressed gratitude for the "crucial role" NED played in developing PIN's capabilities over the past five years.) PIN also sought funding from USAID/Baghdad in Fall 2005, but was informed there were no funds available for PIN projects.

Journalism Program

¶7. (U) PIN's first initiative for Iraq was a program to train Iraqis to become journalists (ref E). The former Czech dissident, Jan Urban, and an Iraqi journalist with Radio Free Europe experience, Sami Alkjora, traveled to Jordan to teach participants the philosophy of independent and objective reporting. Thirty journalists graduated in 2005.

¶8. (U) The next step for the graduates is to gain practical experience. After training, PIN places them as interns with Iraqi publications. The graduates write articles using the methods taught by the Center, and then submit them for publication. PIN pays the graduates if their articles are published. So far, 485 articles have been published as part

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of this program. According to PIN, 14 of the graduates are serious about pursuing journalism as a profession, and will return to Jordan for follow-up training in February 2006.

NGO Program

¶9. (U) The goal of PIN's NGO training program is to foster the creation of new Iraqi NGOs, and teach advanced management skills to existing NGOs. After Iraqis are selected for the program and trained in Jordan (in groups of 7-10), they return to Iraq to develop and administer their own projects. In the case of start-up NGOs, PIN provides micro-grants, roughly \$2,000, for these projects. Although the projects are tiny, each NGO is required to fully account for the funds, and to prepare the paperwork required by a typical international donor, so that the NGOs learn how to professionally manage a larger aid project from start to finish. The most successful NGOs return to Jordan for follow-up training. To date, 85 people have been trained as part of this program.

¶10. (U) Examples of successful micro-grant projects include:

-- DEMOCRACY PROJECT: one NGO trained a theater troupe to travel around the country presenting "plays" about the new Iraqi Constitution to the community. According to PIN, this project provided Iraqis with a "safe" forum in which to discuss sensitive political issues.

-- HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT: another NGO developed a photography course for IRAQI children intended to help them understand their human rights.

¶11. (U) In addition to training NGOs, PIN will conduct a

"train-the-trainer" course in June 2006 to further accelerate the creation of new Iraqi NGOs.

Civil Society Training

¶12. (U) PIN is assessing whether it is possible to provide capacity-building training similar to that conducted with Belarusian civil society (refs A, C). Such training typically involves a cross-disciplinary group composed of a mayor, a PIN-trained NGO, a civil servant, and a president of a teaching union. The group works on projects designed to help them network effectively across sectors on local governance-related issues. PIN said it applied for an NED grant, and hopes to provide training in July and Fall 2006.

¶13. (U) In addition, Prague City Hall funded a project (the cost was approximately \$43,000) to bring nine Iraqi urban planners to Prague in January 2006 for four weeks of city planning training. According to local news reports of the visit, the Iraqi planners said they came to Prague to learn how to plan new development, such as shopping districts, while preserving their culture, as the Czechs have done in Prague. Nisan Jazairi, a Czech-Iraqi who runs a development company in Baghdad, and is son of Iraq's former culture minister, helped arrange the visit. He said the Czechs want to help the Iraqis create a "recipe book" for a functional city plan.

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